

# HOUSECALLS

Gabe's October 2017 Stuart Florida Real Estate HouseCalls



## Preparing garden mums for the winter

Lovely mums are in their full glory in October. Some late blooming varieties will make it completely through the month.

If you planted garden mums (as opposed to container or florist mums) in the spring, help ensure their survival by mulching heavily after the first frost, according to bhg.com. Mulch at least four-inches deep

around the plant and in-between branches. Pinch off old blooms, but keep the branches in tact until spring. When spring comes, you'll want to pull away the mulch to allow new shoots.

One note: Only garden mums will overwinter. Florist mums or container mums will not make it no matter how lovingly they are tended. They don't develop the stolons necessary for survival.

## How to buy a home when there aren't many on the market

In economic parlance, many describe today's housing market this way: demand is high and supply is low. In practical terms this means there are more buyers than homes for sale. While this isn't true in all areas of the country, it is true in many areas.

According to USA Today, there was a 4.3 month supply of homes nationally in August of 2017. That means it would take a little more than four months to run out of homes for sale if no other homes came on the market. This number was down from earlier in the summer when there was a 4.6-month supply. The normal number of homes for sale is a 6-month supply.

Why is supply of homes for sale so low? Baby Boomers don't want to sell, according to USA Today. A recent realtor.com survey showed that 85 percent of Baby Boomers aren't selling but 60 percent of mil-



## HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

lennials are.

In this market, sellers may easily get the price they want, but buyers must have all their shingles in a row these days.

Here's how you have the best chance of snagging the house you want:

### ***Get your financing ready***

First get pre-qualified for a loan. This is an informal process where you visit with

various lenders, giving them an overview of your financial situation. The lenders can then give you an idea of how much you can borrow and an idea of interest rates. But, beware, this is not a promise to loan you the money. It merely gives you working numbers.

### ***Shop around***

The good thing about pre-qualification is that you can start shopping around before you are ready to buy. You can get an idea of what you can afford and what you want in a house. Even if this isn't your first time in the market, don't skip the growing period, according to USNews. If you have been out of the market for more than a year, then you don't know what is out there.

### ***Get pre-approved***

When you know you want to take the plunge, get pre-approved for a loan. At this point, you should have an idea of which lender you might want to use. The lender checks your credit, verifies employment, and confirms your ability to qualify for a mortgage. With a pre-approval in hand,

## Ask the Expert



*We are trying to decide between a 30-year mortgage and a 15 year mortgage. The interest rate is a bit lower on the 15-year but the payments are nearly twice as high. What is the value to us of going with the 15-year?*

The first obvious answer is that you pay off the mortgage more quickly. But, if you can afford payments on the 15-year mortgage, there is one big advantage: Equity.

According to [mtgprofessor.com](http://mtgprofessor.com), the difference is dramatic.

Suppose you want to finance a \$100,000 home for 30 years. At an interest rate of 4.25 percent, you'll have an affordable payment of \$492. If you take a 15-year mortgage at 3.375 percent, the payment is 44 percent higher at \$709 per month.

The big difference in the deal comes over time. In five years, the amount you owe on a 15-year mortgage is reduced by \$27,900. During the same period, a 30-year mortgage sees a reduction of just \$9,192.

## The Robo-Calling Epidemic Riles Millions

Telemarketers have been a nuisance to phone owners for nearly as long as landlines have been in existence and today there are more than ever.

According to popular robocalling prevention company YouMail, in one single month, June of 2016, there were 2.4 billion robocalls in the United States; an increase of about a billion calls over the previous year. According to the New York Times, this resulted in millions of complaints to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

It's illegal in the U.S. to robocall people who haven't agreed to accept robocalls. But that hasn't stopped the bad guys because it's nearly free to do. Companies set up a calling station from anywhere in the world. These networks operate over the internet and use automated systems to dial numbers, sometimes from a database and sometimes blindly trying millions of numbers. Once a person answers the phone with a standard greeting, the program connects them to an actual person to move forward with the sales pitch.

Operating in this way means that telemarketers can call more people more efficiently than ever before. To make matters worse, adding a number to the Do Not Call List, historically a way to block calls, does nothing to curb the offshore companies that will often suffer no repercussions.

Be aware that you might inadvertently be giving a robo-caller permission to call you. If you buy something online, note that there is often a checked box giving permission to other companies to market to you. Uncheck those boxes.

Although there isn't a fool-proof way to avoid these robocalls completely, The New York Times suggests that there are a few things that can help the problem. First, don't answer any calls from an unrecognized number. Answering tells the caller they have found

a legitimate number and they will target more calls to it in the future. Just because the number shows up as a local area code does not mean that it is a local call. Second, look for cellphone apps that can stop calls from known robodials. These services can disconnect the line,



According to [mtgprofessor.com](http://mtgprofessor.com), the home equity growth on the 15-year is three times as large.

As a practical matter, this means your debt load is lower and your flexibility is higher.

The equity in your home can be useful if you want to buy a bigger home. It can serve as a down payment on your next home. Equity equals buying power.

More equity is also a boon in retirement. You can use your equity with a reverse mortgage to help fund retirement.



## Alternative to granite

# Soapstone countertops combine beauty with utility

If a stone material can be called flexible, then soapstone is that material.

Soapstone, actually a mineral known as steatite, is a somewhat rare stone that is made up of talc, a soft mineral, and magnesium among others. Time, heat and pressure forge the minerals together into a veined, relatively soft stone that compares favorably to marble or granite for countertops, floors and sinks.

In fact, soapstone has much to recommend it for countertops.

First, it is always unique. Every slab of soapstone is different. Your slab won't be like that owned by anyone else.

Second, it is versatile. Unlike zinc, for example, it is heat resistant. Unlike granite, marble and limestone, it is non-porous and does not have to be sealed to prevent staining. This non-porous quality also means it doesn't harbor bacteria and is easy to clean. Acids from lemons or tomato juice won't affect it and neither will alkaline found in some household cleaners.

Third, it is easy to maintain. Owners will want to wipe a thin layer of mineral oil over the surface at regular intervals. This helps expose its deeper tones and veining, according to [vermontsoapstone.com](http://vermontsoapstone.com).

It is a soft stone, however, and will scratch or chip over time. The good news is that it is easy to repair. Light scratches can be smoothed with simple oiling. Deeper scratches can be sanded. And a chip can be easily repaired using a two-step glue.

Soapstone is affordable but not cheap. It costs between \$70 to \$120 per square foot, according to [hunker.com](http://hunker.com). That is less than marble but comparable to high-end granite.

Many other uses for soapstone reflect its ability to retain heat. Historically, it was used as a fireplace material, since once heated it slowly radiates the heat long after the fire has died. That is why it has been used as a boot dryer and bed-warmer. Vermont Soapstone still sells small slabs for use as bedwarmers. At \$42 each, they make a warm gift for chilly nights.

## Watch out for witches and Belles

As you might imagine, superheroes and other movie characters take the spotlight for 2017, especially for kids.

Topping the list for girls, there is Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*. You knew that. And for boys, that means the beast. Naturally. Belle should be followed closely by Wonder Woman impersonators, or so the seers in retail predict.

For adults, *Game of Thrones* themes abound. For women, Daenerys, mother of dragons, is a natural and easy costume that mainly requires a white wig and blue dress. For the guys, Jon Snow's leather duds or black cape with ever-present sword make a manly presence.

According to the National Retail Federation, the last decade of children's costumes has been ruled by a throng of princesses spurred on by Disney movie re-releases and kept afloat by the 2013 hit *Frozen*. The top spot for boys was occupied by superheroes and other action stars.

As for adults, superheroes ranked high last year. Witches, vampires and slasher movie villains were also plentiful.



## Marching bands treat fans to pageantry

One reward for college football fans who loyally attend games: The marching band.

Although they are a treat for the eyes and ears, band performances are usually covered up by television commercials. So, to view the spectacle, you have to be at the field. And what a spectacle it is.

Bands wow the fans with precision marching, blending music with moves, high stepping, gliding, or dancing to magically end up in patterns and words.

Most bands have some military influence in either uniform or march. This is partly because making 200 or more people end up in the right place takes military precision. And, it's partly because of band origins.

Most authorities say bands started in ancient times as loosely organized troupes of players and they evolved to give direction to soldiers on the field. After their use in battle became less important, bands served as symbols of power and pageantry.

Football gave bands a new field of play and, beginning in 1845 with the first marching band at Notre Dame, they have owned that territory.

Nearly every band today has signature moves, combining sentiment, dazzle, and fun.

For sentiment, try the University of West Virginia's Mountaineer band's presentation of Simple Gifts.

On the dazzle side, the University of Wisconsin satisfies with its 5th Quarter performance.

For fun, the University of Texas at Longhorn band performs marching magic then sits in the stands and smacks cowbells to distract the opposing team.

Jackson State University's Sonic Boom combines contemporary music and dance with marching.

Joining a marching band is a commitment of talent and time. After a tryout that tests music and physical skills, members must practice 10 to 20



# October 2017



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5 Harvest Moon 	6	7
8	9 Columbus Day 	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 National Boss Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31 Halloween 		Fire Prevention Month		

## Martin County Townhouses & Condos August 2017

Click on the Image for the full report

### Monthly Market Detail - August 2017 Townhouses and Condos Martin County



Summary Statistics	August 2017	August 2016	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	108	79	36.7%
Paid in Cash	66	42	57.1%
Median Sale Price	\$143,000	\$136,000	5.1%
Average Sale Price	\$168,378	\$152,181	10.6%
Dollar Volume	\$18.2 Million	\$12.0 Million	51.3%
Median Percent of Original List Price Received	94.6%	94.9%	-0.3%
Median Time to Contract	38 Days	52 Days	-26.9%
Median Time to Sale	80 Days	80 Days	0.0%
New Pending Sales	116	95	22.1%
New Listings	103	117	-12.0%

View all Market Reports for [Martin County](#), [Saint Lucie County](#), and [Florida \(statewide\)](#)



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